PEAKS OF SHALA

donkey gazing profoundly upon the liquid gray weather.

Obviously this was a rich house, and we followed Sadiri Luka[1] expectantly, up the stone stairs and down a long hall mysterious with closed doors, to a large room full of color. There were rugs on the stone floor, rugs on the stone walls, floor cushions covered with rugs in front of the fireplace. There was no other furniture save a row of old rifles on a wall. Their slender four-foot-long barrels were inlaid with silver, their curved thin butts were of silver chased and enameled, their triggers were intricate flint-lock affairs, and we tore our eyes from them with a wrench, to reply with proper courteousness to the welcome of our host.

While he made the coffee a woman came quietly through the door beside the fireplace and greeted us with poised and gracious dignity—one of those many beautiful Albanian women who, because they were so poised and so silent, remain a background for all our memories of the mountains, more mysterious behind their level eyes and courteous phrases than Turkish women behind their veils.

Sitting on the cushions, we drank the coffee and the rakėjia, from time to time responding to the greeting of other guests come to meet us. Perolli was quiet, fallen into one of the moods which we had learned not to interrupt with requests for interpreting. There was constraint in the atmosphere, and when, presently, he fell

[1] [In upper Thethis--Anal ysis]

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

big courtyard gates, and having no windows to the street on the ground floor. Like all Oriental houses, they are only of two stories; the upper, which contains the living rooms of the family, being reached by an outside wooden staircase under cover of the broad pent of the roof projecting over the landing or gallery on which all the rooms open.

In more remote towns, such as Prisrend or Skodra, the streets look dreary and deserted in the extreme, besides being extremely narrow and ill-paved, if paved at all, and the bazaars and shops are exceedingly mean and poor. The furniture consists chiefly of a low divan with very hard cushions, a few chairs and a mirror, and the lime-washed walls are sometimes decorated with a dado representing a landscape, executed in the crudest possible style chiefly in one colour. A shelf often runs round the walls to hold the copper *ibriks* and other utensils, and above it are hung the rich assortment of arms which is the pride of every family.

In the mountain districts the houses of the beys are complete fortresses, being surrounded by high walls pierced with loopholes for musketry. Only in times of open hostility, however, is it necessary to take any precautions against possible foes, for an Albanian's notion of honour does not allow him to slay a man in his own house, deadly as may be his feud with him. The villages of these districts are generally remote from each other, perched in high and inaccessible situations. The furniture of the cottages is limited to a few mats and rugs, a *sofra*, the low stand on which meals are served in Turkish

4: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
EG1 Albania EG1

fashion, a well-scoured copper pan to mix the meal in, a wooden bowl or two, a few horn spoons, a copper *ibrik*, or coffee pot, and a brass lamp. One of the two rooms is used as a storehouse for the maize or grapes, which are spread out and sprinkled with salt in order to preserve them. The other serves as general living and sleeping apartment, where the fire is made on the floor, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. Each house has its garden well stocked with fruit and vegetables, and its tobacco plot, surrounded by a high loopholed wall. Each village has, too, its green, in one corner of which is the paved threshing-floor, where the grain is trodden out by horses.

The physical appearance of the women of Albania varies according to the district they inhabit, the tribe to which they belong, and the conditions under which they live. The Skipetars of the Drin and the Gheg and Miridite women of North Albania generally are tall, handsome, and well-made, having good complexions and not infrequently fair hair, which, as the following verse from one of their folk-songs shows, is much admired:—

O maiden so tender,
No pipe of Vizier
Was ever so slender
As thou art, my dear!
The soft silken tresses
Of thy yellow hair,
The glad breeze caresses,
Like flax threads are fair.

They are also dignified in demeanour, capable of undergoing fatigue and hardship, and exceedingly courageous.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER III

THE ALBANIAN HOUSE

342 At its simplest an Albanian peasant's house was very simple indeed—no more than a small, square room with walls of undressed stones from the nearest stream; a man so poor had no money or time to spend on transporting better materials from a distance. The stones were bedded in mud and bound together every three feet or so by horizontal beams; in their turn the 'belts' were strengthened, particularly at the corners, by cross-timbers. The roof was a steep framework of timber covered with stone slabs but never with thatch or boards, for the house would stand no chance if an enemy flung a blazing firebrand on these. The doorway was low, but the wooden door, emblematic of the insecurity that lasted until Turkish rule ended, was strong enough not to be easily [350] broken down from outside. In most cases there was not even a hole in the wall for window, and there was never a chimney—a ring of stones in the middle kept the log-fire in its place, and the smoke found its own way out between the rafters unhampered by a ceiling. A kitchen-crook, a most important article, was suspended over the fire from a tie-beam. The floor was of beaten earth. In sum, the house was the most rudimentary type of stone and timber architecture.

352 415 The furnishings were in keeping. They consisted of a three-legged stool or two, a box or pile of bedding but no bedsteads, a rough shelf with a frying-pan and a few platters and pots, a big metal jug for boiling water, an earthenware pot for holding drinking water, a round dining-table on stumpy supports about ten inches high, a flour-bin, a pan for mixing bread, perhaps a pan for baking it, and nothing for washing—the nearest stream served for that. A metal tray with coffee cups inverted to keep them clean and a tiny pot with a long handle for making Turkish coffee rested by the hearth, a few satchels of home-dressed wool and a distaff hung on the wall, and a hen stared at the company from her nest under [353] the eaves. The only ornaments were yellow maize-cobs, rosy pomegranates, and strings of onions or garlic, all hanging from the 000 tie-beams. At meal times a cat took up a vantage point under the

342 monly used than at present. The shift from wheat to maize as staple cereal deprived the farmers in many parts of Albania of roofing material.

[353] The interiors of most houses are quite bare, with no carpets on the hewn plank floors, and [354] little decoration on the walls. In the older houses a fireplace covers about 10 square feet of floor area, and the smoke finds its way out through the thatch or roof tiles. In so doing, it cures meats hung in a rack above the fire, particularly in Catholic houses where pork is preserved for the winter.

The introduction of the *kulla* brought with it some drastic architectural innovations. The *kulla* is a 3-storied square tower, built with one purpose in mind—defense. Nopcsa finds a high correlation between the incidence of *kullas* in different villages and *bairaks*, and that of death by violence. The lower floor of the *kulla* is for the shelter of animals. The second and third are for habitation. One door opens into the stable below, a second, up a flight of bare steps, to the living quarters.

With a multi-storied structure something had to be done about smoke. Hence fireplaces were built one above the other, and a high [514] chimney ensured draft. One of the principal troubles with the old-fashioned house was its lack of a toilet. The feuding Gheg, attending the needs of nature in a corn field of a frosty morning, made an excellent target to his enemies hiding in ambush, and the feudal code contained no sporting rules to outlaw this easy shot. The *kulla*-builders therefore constructed an overhanging enclosed balcony of masonry, to serve as "W. C." In the conflict between sanitation and safety, safety won. The drain hole is made crooked to prevent pot shots from below. Since there are few windows, and these are built more for gunplay than for light or ventilation, a strong draft usually rushes up the drain hole. Down below in a heap against the wall the refuse accumulates, and were it not for the healthy mountain climate and the hardihood of the mountaineers, epidemics would be commoner than they are.

Gheg houses have both a social and an economic implication. They are usually large, and accommodate an extended family and its animals. Serving for defense, they reflect the